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Crow's Changeling

By Sarah Prineas

5 September 2005

At the dead time of the year, the gray snows of winter lay thin on the ground. It was too early for crocuses or daffodils, but not too early for mud. The crows had arrived, announcing something they thought was terribly important, gathering in dark hordes in the row of trees along the road. I didn't mind the starlings, the other garbage birds of the Midwest, because they gathered and disappeared like clouds of smoke. But the crows were ill-omened and I hated them. I went out, turned on the truck, and honked the horn at them; they wheeled up shrieking and complaining, but soon settled down again to wait.

I trudged back inside, shivering. A cluster of bottles and rubber nipples awaited my attention in the sink, and the diaper pail behind the door was beginning to smell.

I'm too old for this. I closed the door softly behind me, hanging my sweater on its hook. *Too old to begin at motherhood all over again. And too young to be a grandmother—I'm only forty, for God's sake.* I paused, listening. The sound of the crows outside was muted; there was no answering cry from the baby's room. Time enough for tea, then, before she awoke from her nap.

I'd barely gotten the kettle filled and the gas on when something stopped me. Silence. The crows had stopped calling. I went to the door, twitched aside the curtain to look out.

A crow man dressed in black feathers stood on the doorstep, peering in with a yellow, darting eye. I flinched away, then, curious, peeked out again, but now he was just a man. Dressed in a tattered black raincoat over jeans and a dark sweater.

My house was at the end of a long, muddy road which, in turn, was at the end of a long stretch of highway that led to the nearest town, about twenty miles away. I looked out at him. Saw no car in the driveway, no mud on his boots. *Hmmm.* He was standing, arms

[Before Paphos](#)

by Loretta Casteen

8 January 2007

It starts again. The baby begins to cough and choke.

[Locked Doors](#)

by Stephanie Burgis

1 January 2007

You can never let anyone suspect, his mother told him. That was the first rule she taught him, and the last, before she left him here alone with It.

[Heroic Measures](#)

by Matthew Johnson

18 December 2006

Pale as he was, it was hard to believe he would never rise from this bed. Even in the darkest times, she had never really feared for him; he had always been strong, so strong.

[Love Among the Talus](#)

by Elizabeth Bear

11 December 2006

Nilufer raised her eyes to his. It was not what women did to men, but she was a princess, and he was only a bandit. "I want to be a Witch," she said. "A Witch and not a Queen. I wish to be not loved, but wise. Tell your bandit lord, if he can give me that, I might accept his gift."

[Archived Fiction Dating back to 9/1/00](#)

